

TESTIMONY OF NOOR RANA IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL 367,
AAC ELECTRONIC DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE, MARCH 14, 2022

Representative Steinberg, Senator Anwar, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Noor Rana and I'm a first year Master's in public health candidate at Yale School of Public Health.

I am here to express my strong support for SB 367, An Act Concerning Electronic Delivery Systems and Vapor Products. This proposed legislation is a step in the right direction to protect the youth of Connecticut from the devastating impacts of e-cigarettes - a public health crisis that keeps getting worse day by day.

Over the years, youth e-cigarette use in the United States has skyrocketed to what the U.S. Surgeon General and the FDA have called “epidemic” levels.¹ The youth e-cigarette use is escalating at unprecedented levels. Data released in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2019, shows that from 2017 to 2019 nicotine vaping more than doubled among 8th, 10th and 12th graders.² Now, the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey shows that 43.6% of high school students and 17.2% of middle school students reported using e-cigarettes on more than 20 of the past 30 days, and the daily use was 27.6% among current high school e-cigarettes users and 8.3% among current middle school e-cigarette users.³

Evidence shows that flavored e-cigarettes have fueled this pandemic⁴ and a recent Surgeon General report on smoking cessation very clearly states, that “the role of flavors in promoting initiation of tobacco products use among the youth is well-established”⁵ and flavors are among the most common reasons for using e-cigarettes amongst the youth.

The opposition often states that e-cigarettes don't cause addiction and don't have serious health consequences but that is far from the truth. There is alarming evidence that e-cigarettes *increase* the susceptibility to long-term addiction; youth are not just experimenting with use. Data show that 1.6

¹ Office of the Surgeon General, “Surgeon General's Advisory on E-Cigarette Use Among Youth,” December 18, 2018, <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/surgeon-generals-advisory-on-e-cigarette-use-among-youth-2018.pdf>.

² Miech, R, et al., *Trends in Adolescent Vaping, 2017-2019*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, published online September 18, 2019.

³ Wang, TW, et al., *Tobacco Product Use and Associated Factors Among Middle and High School Students—United States, 2019*, *MMWR*,

⁴ Cullen, KA, et al., *e-Cigarette Use Among Youth in the United States, 2019*, *JAMA*, published online November 5, 2019.

⁵ HHS, Office of the Surgeon General, “Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General,” 2020 <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2020-cessation-sgr-full-report.pdf>.

million middle and high school students were frequent users of e-cigarettes, including 1 million daily users.⁶ Data show that teenagers are struggling with nicotine addiction and withdrawal. With no foolproof way to help youth quit, I believe banning e-cigarettes will help kids from ever getting hooked in the first place.

Further, there is much evidence on the harmful effects of addiction caused by the high levels of nicotine delivered by these products. According to the Surgeon General, “because the adolescent brain is still developing, nicotine use during this critical period can disrupt the formation of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to addiction.”⁷ The Surgeon General found that, “The use of products containing nicotine in any form among youth, including e-cigarettes is unsafe”. Nicotine can also prime the brain for addiction to other drugs.

E-cigarettes also threaten to reverse decades of progress made in reducing youth tobacco use since there is evidence that using e-cigarettes increases the likelihood of youth smoking cigarettes. FDA researchers estimate that there were over 43,000 current youth cigarette smokers who might not have become smokers without e-cigarettes.⁸ For the kids, e-cigarettes are not replacing cigarettes but they are turning non tobacco users into tobacco users.

Claims made that e-cigarette are 95% safer than cigarettes are incorrect; they are widely disputed by U.S government agencies and medical associations.⁹ One of the major oppositions to this bill is that e-cigarettes help smokers quit but no major scientific body in the United States has concluded that e-cigarettes are an effective tobacco cessation device. There is no evidence that smokers can only quit with non-tobacco flavors. There has not been a single randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of flavored vs. non-flavored or tobacco-flavored e- cigarettes on smoking cessation outcomes. FDA reached this conclusion, stating, “There is not sufficient evidence to conclude that youth and young adults are using [e-cigarettes] as a means to quit smoking.”¹⁰ According to the FDA, “systematic reviews found insufficient evidence to conclude

⁶ Cullen, KA, et al., *e-Cigarette Use Among Youth in the United States, 2019*, *JAMA*, published online November 5, 2019.

⁷ CDC, Office of the Surgeon General, “Health Care Professionals: Educate Your Young Patients About the Risks of E-cigarettes,” https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_E-Cig_Health_Care_Provider_Card_508.pdf

⁸ Berry, KM, et al., “Association of Electronic Cigarette Use with Subsequent Initiation of Tobacco Cigarettes in US Youths,” *JAMA Network Open*, 2(2), published online February 1, 2019.

⁹ Deeming Tobacco Products To Be Subject to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, as Amended by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act; Restrictions on the Sale and Distribution of Tobacco Products and Required Warning Statements for Tobacco Products (Final Rule), 81 Fed. Reg. at 29029-30 (May 10, 2016).

¹⁰ *See id.* at 29,028, 29,037.

that e-cigarettes aid smoking cessation.” In reaching this conclusion, the FDA recognized that several studies have found that cigarette smokers who also used e-cigarettes had statistically significantly worse quit rates than those cigarette smokers who did not use e-cigarettes. The FDA also stated that, “the claim that vaping helps smokers quit in meaningful numbers remains unproven’.

In conclusion, we should all recognize that we are facing an epidemic and Connecticut's youth deserve all the protections this bill would provide because this problem will not resolve itself. It requires action by this legislature.